

6. ETHICAL VALUES IN ART EDUCATION

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Abstract: *One of the major problems of contemporary society concerns the moral state of people, especially the younger generation. Although it has always been a concern of human society, the topic of ethics education is more relevant than ever. Thus, in this article, we will analyze ethical values from the perspective of knowledge, understanding, and their correct application in the academic environment. These are essential principles that underlie artistic creation and scientific research, contributing to the formation of integrity professionals and the development of the ability to analyze human behavior in the university environment. Ethical values represent a fundamental pillar in the academic environment, guiding the behavior and decisions of all those involved in the educational process, constituting the set of moral norms that regulate the research process and optimize social interactions within higher education institutions. In this context, we will highlight the role of higher education institutions in promoting and applying ethical values, thus ensuring an integral academic climate which is beneficial for personality development, the growth of ethical thinking, and professional fulfillment.*

Key words: *ethical values, artistic creation, scientific research, educational process*

1. Introduction

The objective of this paper is to analyze and to highlight the necessity for the academic community to know, understand, apply, and promote ethical values in arts education. The article emphasizes the concerns and involvement that professors, researchers and students have in institutional development through improving existing standards of integrity, as well as the identification of those situations that violate the principles of the Code of Ethics and Professional Deontology. The ethical and integrity values are the foundation for the formation of upright professionals, contributing both to the definition of moral thinking towards assumed commitments and to personal development and the feeling of professional fulfillment.

Our approach is strengthened by the introduction of the Academic Ethics and Integrity course implemented in the higher education system through Ministry of National Education Order no. 3131/2018, published in the Official Gazette no. 140 of 14.02.2018. This course is mandatory for master's and doctoral studies and optional for undergraduate studies. Consequently, students acquire the skills, aptitudes, and competencies necessary to understand, respect, and promote the principles of academic ethics and integrity, so that all this knowledge can be correctly applied in life, as well as in scientific research, constituting the premise for the responsible evolution of an individual's professional career, whose aspirations can be achieved through a conscious and oriented effort.²⁷² Moreover, the course content provides an interdisciplinary perspective on the values underlying students' rights and responsibilities, contributing to students' understanding of all aspects of the importance of this discipline. „In the context of academic ethics,

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²⁷² Mirela Ștefănescu, *Etică și integritate academică – Curs*, Biblioteca UNAGE Iași, 2019, p. 9 disponibil <https://www.arteiasi.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Curs-Etica-si-integritate-academica-Mirela-Stefanescu.pdf>, accesat la data de 16.10.2024

students are taught to think critically about ethical decisions, learn to recognize real-life ethical dilemmas through reflection and dialogue”²⁷³.

2. Concerns, principles, and particularities of ethics explored by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Kant

Although ethics has always been a societal concern, it remains a highly relevant topic today. Our exploration of ethical values begins with the foundational works of ancient Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and the later contributions of Immanuel Kant. Central to our discussion are questions that preoccupied Socrates: What constitutes good and evil? How can we discern between right and wrong? What is the meaning of life? And how can we live a virtuous life?

Socrates argued that ignorance, not malice, is the root of evil. He believed that knowledge of the good would lead people to always choose to do good. According to Socrates, virtue is inseparable from knowledge. Socrates saw humans as social beings, believing that individual happiness is tied to the common good and emphasizing the importance of justice and the respect for community laws. Socrates' ideas about ethics, still relevant today, are centered on the perpetual pursuit of truth and goodness, concepts that provide a framework for reflecting on our own moral values. Thus, education, essential for the moral development of the individual, teaches us how to distinguish between good and evil and to act accordingly; individual responsibility, whereby each person, regardless of social status, is responsible for their own actions and decisions; and dialogue as a means of knowledge.

Socrates developed a method of dialogue, known as the *Socratic method*, whereby through a series of questions, the interlocutor was helped to clarify their own ideas and arrive at the truth. Dialogue is an excellent way to arrive at the truth and to enrich our knowledge. By listening to and discussing with others, we can discover new perspectives and better understand the world. Plato, a student of Socrates, expanded on his mentor's ideas about ethics, identifying four keys of virtues: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. A balanced combination of these virtues leads to a virtuous and happy life.

Plato, one of the most influential philosophers of Antiquity, developed a complex and profound ethics, which highlight the knowledge, virtue, and the supreme good. In his view, ethics is closely linked to metaphysics and epistemology, and our moral actions are determined by our knowledge of the ideal world of Forms. Plato argued that education is crucial for developing moral character and building a just society. His philosophy invites us to live a wise and virtuous life, seeking knowledge and the highest good. His ideas remain influential today, inspiring ongoing philosophical discussions.

Unlike Plato, who focused on the ideal world of Forms, Aristotle, a key figure in ethics, concentrated on the real world and human actions. Building on Socrates' ideas, Aristotle developed a systematic ethical theory in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, arguing that virtue is not merely knowledge of the good but a disposition acquired

²⁷³ Gabriela Gruber, *Etica academică și elemente de didactică a acesteia* publicat în volumul *Predarea și Învățarea în învățământul superior, Aspecte teoretice și practice* (pp.235-265), Editura Universitară, Sibiu, 2019, p.8 disponibil https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333058936_Capitolul_Etica_Academică_și_elemente_de_didactică_a_acesteia, accesat la data de 17.10.2024

through practice, which compels us to act in virtuous, good, and positive ways. Aristotle had an intriguing perspective, still relevant today, that „morality is not only about how we behave towards others, but also how we understand and question ourselves”²⁷⁴. Aristotle emphasized the role of community in the moral development of the individual. Through interactions with others and moral conduct towards our neighbors, we learn what it means to be good and how to behave in different situations, thus „placing value on friendship, which becomes a specific and defining feature of humanity”²⁷⁵.

Although Aristotle's ethics centered on virtues and the ultimate goal of human actions, Immanuel Kant, one of the most influential philosophers of the 18th century, shifted the focus to *duty* and *goodwill* as the foundation of morality. Kant posited that moral principles are universal, applicable to all people, regardless of their cultural or societal context. Kant argues that moral principles are universal, not relative, and are grounded in human reason. Thus, the main foundations of Kantian ethics are centered on: *the categorical imperative*, meaning that an action is moral only if the principle governing it could become a universal law, that is, be applicable to all people in all situations; Kant considers that an action has moral worth only if it is motivated by *goodwill*, which is the desire to do what is right simply because it is right and not to gain personal benefit; *respect for the dignity of each person* implies that we must always treat the human person as an end in itself, never as a means to an end. Every person has intrinsic value and must be respected as such.

Ethics, as a branch of philosophy, has evolved over time shaped by the most important thinkers of each era. Thus, the philosophers mentioned in this article, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Kant, have made significant contributions to our understanding of good and evil, virtue and happiness, duty and knowledge. Although each of these philosophers had a different approach, there are also some common points, underlining the importance of reason in moral life, seeking to identify the fundamental principles of right action and considering happiness and the good as essential objectives of human life. We find, therefore, that a deep understanding and awareness of ethical values can help us to form our own vision of good and evil and, obviously, to take moral decisions with the best possible information.

3. The importance of ethical values in art education

Ethics is the branch of philosophy which studies human behavior from the perspective of what is good and what is evil. Ethics is a system of principles and values which provides us with a framework for evaluating human actions, helping us understand what is right and what is wrong in a given situation, guiding our actions and helping us make moral decisions, exploring fundamental questions about happiness and suffering, about freedom and responsibility. The explanatory dictionary provides the following definition: „Ethics is the science that deals with the theoretical study of values and the human condition from the perspective of moral principles, and with their role in social life.

²⁷⁴ Tiberius Vasiniuc, *Principii de etică și integritate în artele spectacolului și în cercetarea artistică*, Ed. UNArt Press, Târgu Mureș, 2020, p. 20

²⁷⁵ Ibidem

It represents the totality of moral conduct norms that regulate relations between people as well as their attitude towards society, a certain social class, state, homeland, family, etc."²⁷⁶. On the other hand, Mircea Leabu defines ethics as „a discipline of dialogue in which each party expresses their own beliefs, personal point of view, and listens to the opinions of others"²⁷⁷. In Government Decision no. 583/10 August 2016, we find the following explanation: „Ethics refers to individual behavior, in an organizational context or not, which can be appreciated or evaluated either from the perspective of explicit ethical values, principles, and rules (codes of ethics, codes of conduct, or other types of documents without the status of a normative act) or tacit ones (organizational culture), or from the perspective of the consequences of the actions themselves."²⁷⁸

The ethical principles which must be respected, so that a person can evolve, fulfill himself personally and professionally, represent the criteria and values of the entire society. „Extrapolating the role of values in the general development of society to the particular development of the academic environment, ethical and moral values are defined, the assumption of which creates the foundations of a conducive environment, suitable for education and professional training. Academic values support university autonomy and democracy in higher education institutions, and at the individual level ensure academic freedom and equal opportunities”²⁷⁹. The values education is a continuous and complex process that requires the commitment of everyone involved in the educational process. Art education is a comprehensive field which intersects with many aspects of human life, including the ethical one. Art, in all its forms, is a mirror of society, reflecting people's values, beliefs and concerns. It is therefore essential that art education integrates a strong ethical dimension.

Therefore, „the norms and ethical issues must be addressed as major concerns of society. In some cultures they are perceived differently according to social contexts, but ethical values must be recognized as universally valid principles, to be applied to anyone, anytime and anywhere”²⁸⁰. Among the universally valid ethical principles which have an objective and absolute character, that do not depend on feelings, habits, beliefs, we mention: honesty, fairness, responsibility, respect, integrity. The Ethical values play an essential role, shaping both the learning process and its outcomes, giving us: *Foundation for decision-making*, by creating a frame of reference to evaluate different options and choose what is right; *Building relationships*, when we act in accordance with our values, we build relationships of trust and respect; *A better society*, thus, by promoting ethical values, the school contributes to the formation of responsible generations capable to build a better, fairer, and more peaceful society.

²⁷⁶ <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/etica>, accesat la data 14.10.2024

²⁷⁷ Mircea Leabu, *Principiile etice-între universalitate și specificul profesiei*. (2015), disponibil la <http://www.mircea-leabu.ro/principiile-etice-intre-universalitate-si-specificul-profesiei/>, accesat la data 14.10.2024

²⁷⁸ Hotărârea Guvernului României Nr. 583/10 august 2016 privind aprobarea Strategiei naționale anticorupție pe perioada 2016 - 2020, publicată în: Monitorul Oficial NR. 644 din 23 august 2016, disponibil la <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/181123>, accesat la data 14.10.2024

²⁷⁹ Beatrice Gabriela Ioan (red), *Etică și integritate academică, Ghid de bune practici*, Ed. Gr. T. Popa, Iași, 2018, p. 9

²⁸⁰ Mirela Ștefănescu, *Etică și integritate academică – Curs*, Biblioteca UNAGE Iași, 2019, p. 12, disponibil <https://www.arteiasi.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Curs-Etica-si-integritate-academica-Mirela-Stefanescu.pdf>, accesat la data de 16.10.2024

4. The ethics of artistic research

The assumption of ethical principles in artistic creation and research involves a series of aspects regarding: understanding, knowledge and promotion of universally valid notions and norms regarding ethics and academic integrity; establishing a management of academic ethics and integrity; establishing procedures to prevent plagiarism in artistic research; the realization of procedures and the rule of avoiding pastiche in artistic creation. Therefore, as Tiberius Vasiniuc appreciated „we have to take into account the many aspects of artistic creation or research in the field of arts, those that create the premises for new directions of analysis and elaboration/improvement of the internal normative framework of the university"²⁸¹.

When we discuss the activity of scientific research, it is necessary to consider the notion of plagiarism, what it represents, how it can be prevented and what are the sanctions arising out from this action. Although many pages can be written about the ethics of artistic research, we will limit ourselves in this paper to pointing out only a few basic aspects related to plagiarism. Plagiarism is the exposition in a written work or an oral communication of some texts, expressions, ideas, demonstrations, data, hypotheses, theories, results or scientific methods extracted from written works, including in electronic format, of other authors, without mentioning this thing and without referring to the original sources. According to DEX the plagiarism is „appropriating ideas from the writings of others while retaining their original form and presenting them as personal creations; to publish, under his own signature, parts of another's work; to commit a literary, artistic or scientific theft"²⁸².

From the professionals research from the field, it was concluded that plagiarism can be intentional, when the one who plagiarizes with premeditation appropriates the creative work of another person, or unintentionally, most often it is the cause of ignorance, misunderstanding of the citation rules, ignorance of the idea of ownership intellectual or disrespectful of another person's creation.²⁸³ On the other hand, in specialized studies we encounter several forms of plagiarism made through copy-paste, mixing, partial citation, paraphrasing, recycling, hybrid, masking, etc. Therefore „knowing the specific rules for preparing a scientific research paper is very useful both from the point of view of creating an original and valuable document, and in terms of avoiding any suspicions of plagiarism"²⁸⁴.

5. The role of higher education institutions in the promotion and application of ethical values

Higher education institutions have an essential role in shaping society's future leaders and specialists. Beyond the transmission of knowledge specific to each field, universities „must open the appetite for knowledge, to present paths to knowledge, to strengthen judgment and to give vigor of moral and intellectual forces"²⁸⁵, having a special responsibility in promoting and applying ethical values, so that each

²⁸¹ Tiberius Vasiniuc, *op. cit.*, p. 26

²⁸² <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/plagiat>, 15.10.2024

²⁸³ Emilia Șercan, *Deontologie academică. Ghid practic*, Editura Universității din București, 2017 p. 24, 25.

²⁸⁴ Mirela Ștefănescu, *The education and the developement of the individual in an upstanding academic environment. The role of ethics in the academic process*, publicat în *Realizarea de sine - interpretări psihologice și educative*, Vol. II, pp.123-128, Ed. Ars Longa, Chișinău, 2019

²⁸⁵ Tiberius Vasiniuc, *op.cit.*, p. 76

member of the academic community to be able to develop, find self-confidence and form ethical thinking. In this regard, universities develop and apply, based on the framework Code of Ethics and Professional Deontology, issued by the Ministry of Education, their own Code of Ethics and Professional Deontology, with the aim of permanently supporting and developing an academic climate of collaboration, mutual respect, collegiality, trust, discretion, facilitating the evolution of the quality of teaching and research activity. „The academic community assimilate the ethical standards which are a response to the expectations expressed by society towards this community”²⁸⁶.

The Code of ethics and professional deontology applies to all members of the academic community and promotes ethical values and principles such as: academic freedom, personal autonomy, justice and equity, respect and tolerance, personal merit, transparency, individual and public responsibility, intellectual honesty and correctness, goodwill and altruism. The Ethics Commission has the task of supervising the observance of ethical norms and professional deontology. Being a unique structure of the university, with multiple attributions, the Ethics Commission has the role of preventing and combating acts which violate ethical values within the university.

6. Conclusions

The ethical values represent the set of moral norms that regulate teaching and research activity and optimize social interactions within higher education institutions, being a fundamental tool in the academic environment, which guides the behavior and decisions of all those involved in the educational process. Understanding and disseminating ethical values in art education provides an appropriate and beneficial environment for personality formation, by exploring one's own values and actions or developing feelings such as empathy or compassion; social awareness, art can raise public awareness of important social issues such as inequality, discrimination and violence, encouraging critical thinking and the ability to analyze and evaluate, promoting tolerance and cultural diversity, improving also the communication. Therefore, the need to know and to apply ethical values in artistic education is an essential factor in the realization of strategies regarding the improvement of Romanian university education, aligning it with European standards.

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